

(Washington, D.C.) - Congressman Ciro D. Rodriguez (TX-23) backed legislation in the House of Representatives to ease a State Department backlog that has made it difficult for Americans to receive their passports. S. 966 was unanimously approved by the House on Monday night.

"I have heard from hundreds of constituents from across my district who missed or had to delayed travel plans because of the months-long backlog to receive a passport," said Congressman Ciro Rodriguez. "This common sense legislation will help the State Department process applications more quickly, and cut down on delays for travelers."

Passport requests skyrocketed following the implementation of a new law requiring Americans traveling by air to Mexico, Canada, the Caribbean and Bermuda to hold a passport. The increase has resulted in significant delays with many waiting months to receive a passport.

The Passport Backlog Reduction Act (S. 966) gives the State Department the authority to hire retired former staffers who are trained and authorized to process passport applications. Current law denies retirement benefits to these retirees if they exceed strict wages earned and hours worked caps. The legislation approved by the House waives these requirements and makes it possible for the retired workers to return to work and help ease the passport shortage.

Congressman Rodriguez's office has already assisted hundreds of travelers who have had difficulty obtaining a passport. Any resident of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Congressional District needing assistance with a delayed passport application is invited to contact Congressman Rodriguez's office toll-free at (866) 915-3493.

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